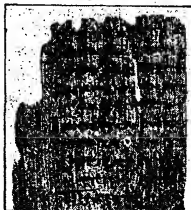


PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS

I WENT round to the British Museum last week and consulted Mr. T. C. Skeat, Deputy Keeper of the Manuscript Department, on the news from Cairo about the discovery of a "Gospel according to St. Thomas."

Mr. Skeat showed me the tattered fragments of papyrus found on the site of Oxyrhynchus, a chief city of ancient Egypt, by two Oxford scholars



The British Museum Fragment.

In 1903. The British Museum fragment is in Greek and begins "These are the... words which Jesus the living (Lord) spake to... and to Thomas, and he said unto (them), Everyone that hearkens to these words shall never taste of death." There follow five apocryphal sayings of Christ.

In 1945 a large hoard of early gnostic writings was discovered in Upper Egypt and it is now announced in Cairo that one of the manuscripts appears to be a full translation into Coptic of the British Museum papyrus.

It has taken more than ten years to finish haggling with the farmers who found the

manuscripts in a huge jar, and to pay of the various speculators who became involved in the find.

Now an international committee of experts is at work on the manuscripts in the Coptic Museum in Cairo and they are hoping at the British Museum that the first translations will be available by the end of the year.

Mr. Maugham's Day

MR. SOMERSET MAUGHAM is here again on his autumn visit, being feted by his friends, catching up on the theatre and seeing far too many people.

Even to me, who am not eighty-three, his days seem ridiculously overcrowded. Why, for instance, should he open tomorrow afternoon at the Army & Navy Stores an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Heinemann authors? There seems little enough reason for the exhibition, except as evidence that authors, even Heinemann authors, cannot necessarily paint as well as they write.

But Mr. Maugham will do anything for his friends and his publisher, Mr. A. S. Frere of Heinemann's, is one of them.

The Broken Pen

Mr. Somerset Maugham writes a very beautiful hand and has a good eye for a picture, but he has himself never painted or drawn anything.

I told him last week that I admired his handwriting and he said that the first rule was

to write with a gold nib instead of a steel ball.

"I have a whole battery of good old-fashioned fountain pens," he said. "Many years ago a journalist asked me what I was writing and I said: 'Nothing, because my fountain pen has broken.' He cabled of this piece of news. The next thing I knew, fountain pens started pouring in from manufacturers all over the world and since then I've had no excuse to stop writing."

"What are you writing now?"

"Nothing" said Mr. Maugham.

Motor Mart

EVERY year, at the Motor Show, Earl's Court is transformed into a vast marriage bureau. From Wednesday onwards, thousands of unions will be forged, to last for any-

thing from a brief, angry honeymoon to a lifetime.

The man chiefly responsible for the introductions is, and has been since the Crystal Palace in 1920, the unruffled, competent, Mr. A. A. Goode, Exhibition Manager of the S.M.M.T., who has to oversee some 4,000 men and spend about £80,000 before the show can open.

When I visited him at the end of last week the parquet flooring was just being laid. There was not a stand to be seen and in the huge naked hall there was only one small and lonely saloon gyrating unsteadily on a turntable.

Mr. Goode is not dismayed. In his time he has met and overcome every type of emergency. The doors of his marriage mart will open on Wednesday and, even without the

dazzle of a Docker Daimler, there will be an American exhibit with television in the back seat, two turbo-jet cars, Donald Campbell's "Bluebird" and several tons of flowers and bunting to quicken the most sluggish heartbeat.

How Now, Mr. Moss?

LAST Sunday, Stirling Moss wrote quite casually in THE SUNDAY TIMES that he drives with his hands at ten minutes to two on the steering-wheel.

I find this extraordinary. The best and the greatest drivers I have met drive with their hands at approximately 3.45 or when idling, at 4.40 o'clock. The 3.45 position should give the maximum leverage in an emergency.

Everybody has indices for spotting a bad driver in the car

ahead. There are the obvious ones such as frequent nervous beams from the stoplights, hysterical hand-signals and the windscreen - wiper operating when there is no rain about.

My own clues to danger include two talkative women in the front seat, a bowler or homburg hat unconsciously centred on the driver's head, and men's hands, especially when gloved, grasping the top-most segment of the steering-wheel.

Hitherto, pace Moss, these clues have been infallible.

Music's Cousteau

IN commissioning a three-act ballet from Hans Werner Henze, Sadler's Wells has stolen a march upon our graver musical institutions. The composer and his neo-Neapolitan wonder-boy of German music, has, at the age of just thirty, a European reputation which many a senior composer might envy: in this country, however, his music has rarely been performed.

Long residence in Ischia, and on the Neapolitan seaboard no doubt equips him to treat the subject of Ondine with particular sympathy. With his easy command of English (he is a close friend of Sir William Walton) and his liking for naval blazers, Henze can have no difficulty overcoming the xenophobia always latent in English musical life.

I am sorry, though, that the directors of Sadler's Wells could not have dredged up a more original theme for his debut; but Henze is a practised ballet composer (his "Jack Pudding" survives its wonderfully ludicrous title) and he will no doubt recharge the batteries of this hoary submarine epic.

Helix-News

WITH the L.P.C.'s simultaneous rejection of five schemes for the development of Victoria Station, the powerful champions of the helicopter have been further rebuffed.

Meanwhile, in Washington, work has started on the new State Department, which is to have a "heliport" on its roof so that diplomatic pouches may be flown direct to the national airport.

The 8,000 State Department employees, now dispersed in twenty-nine buildings, will be housed beneath the heliport, and below them will be vast garage space.

This monumental scheme makes our own fiddling with helicopters, underground garages and the Whitehall sprawl look rather infantile. My only consolation, from a quick glance at the plans, is that the new State Department will certainly be no architectural adornment to America's capital. I also note that the Secretary of State's banqueting and reception rooms have been placed on the top floor just below the helicopter landing-strip.

Bag and Baggage

THE future of Colin Wilson is an inexhaustible topic of debate in literary circles.

The splash caused by "The Outsider" was phenomenal and, though the size of a Gollancz impression is often a matter for amused conjecture in the book trade, conservative estimates add up the present

nine impressions to well over 20,000 copies.

How many of these copies have been read and how many are "furniture sales" — the trade name for the snob book left conspicuously lying around — is a mystery. One add-book-seller describes "The Outsider" as the book that everyone



Time and Life Inc.

"Outsider" Inside Bag.

wants to have read but nobody wants to read.

Meanwhile, Colin Wilson, with his romantic good looks, his Bohemian habits and that famous sleeping-bag, here carefully posed with studious author for the "Life" photographer, is the literary heart-throb of the undergraduate and -ette. The cover of the American "Saturday Review of Literature" has been his, and "Life" has pithily featured him under the title "Fuss Over English Egg-head."

But what is it all about and where will Colin Wilson go from here? The debate, sympathetic to him as a brilliant and likeable young man but with critical second thoughts on the writer, continues.

Interim judgment will be pronounced next year when Wilson publishes his second

book, a novel on the man he considers the classic "outsider" — Jack the Ripper.

Hon.?

WITH cries (no doubt) of "Dig that classy cat!", Americans were last week admiring full-page coloured advertisements depicting Lady Augusta Balfour, Lord John Balfour and the Hon. Piers Morgan snugly and tastefully clad in Vivella children's wear.

Truth in advertising? The names are fictitious and the children American.

Box-office Politics

THE spectacular success of the Bolshoi Ballet has overshadowed the quietly supreme artistry of the Variety Theatre of China. Box-office rivalry being much stronger than political bonds, I was not surprised to find that there has been no contact between the two Communist companies, nor even a graceful exchange of seats for each other's performances.

When I visited the Chinese off-stage they expressed delight with their reception here and no hint of jealousy at the superior publicity accorded the Russian dancers. They prefer keeping to themselves to being photographed out shopping. They have not visited Limehouse, nor even a Chinese restaurant. They stick close to their Boho hotel and eat Western.

The troupe is paid by the State, who also maintain their training school in Peking and take all their profits. When I asked one of the company if he preferred this to being an independent artist, he burst into a flood of vehement Chinese.

"He says 'yes'," said the interpreter, blandly.

Hey!

"DENNIS MORGAN plans to produce 'Red, Red Nose', a musical biography based on the life of Robert Burns, in Scotland."

— "Los Angeles Times."